

1:Opler E-5 (1931-1937)1941

(ca. 1870) NT8 Eastern Apache NT8
Chiricahua

CHILDHOOD

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One of the relatives goes to the man who knows the ceremony. He says, "We have been unable to bring up our children. We need you to help us."

My relative sits there. He just makes some kind of sound in his throat first. Then he says, "Well, I'll do it. But I need a buckskin with a piece of turquoise tied at the middle of the head and a yellow horse. Give two other things, anything you wish, just so it makes four, a set of four."

They get these things together and bring them to him, and the ceremony takes place.

Once he has accepted the task, the shaman busies himself with the construction of the cradle. With prayers and ritual, oak, ash, or walnut is gathered for the ovate frame, and sotol or yucca stalk for the cross-pieces that will form the back of the cradle.

For the back part of the cradleboard, the cross-pieces are of sotol if the cradle is for a boy, and of narrow-leaved yucca if it is for a girl. The sotol, which is jagged edged along the leaf, is called the boy, the "he"; the yucca is called the girl, the "she." These plants are brother and sister, we say.

This sex distinction, however, is not acceptable to all.

A canopy to shield the child's face is made of the stems of red-barked dogwood, mock orange, or Apache plume. A piece of ash connects the frame and the canopy, and ash or oak is used for the footrest. The bedding is of wild mustard, and a pillow of *Solanium trifolium* prevents excessive movement of the head. The buckskin covering for the frame is usually colored with yellow ocher. In the buckskin which covers the top of the canopy, symbols are cut which sometimes have sex value. The girl's cradle is usually decorated with a full moon or half-moon; the boy's cradle, with a cross or four parallel slits.

Some feel that cradleboard materials may be prepared in advance but that, once actual construction has started, the work should be finished the same day. Others permit the outer frame to be made on one day and the cross-pieces and canopy on another. Still others have no strong conviction about the length of time to be allotted to the process as long as the cradle is ready when it is needed. It is assumed that all steps in the construction have been accompanied by prayers for the welfare and long life of the infant. The shaman ties protective amulets on the cradle—bags of pollen, turquoise beads, and pieces of lightning-riven wood.

AN APACHE LIFE-WAY

852 The public part of the ceremony begins in the early morning
756 before relatives and neighbors. The shaman may confine his own
788 part to prayer and the giving of commands to an assistant, or he
may perform the ritual acts alone. The child is marked with
pollen or specular iron ore, and pollen is thrown to the directions.
One practitioner places four dots of pollen on the face of a boy for
whom he is officiating and traces a line of pollen across the bridge
[823] of the nose of a girl. The cradle, and sometimes the child, is held
to the cardinal directions, beginning with the east and proceeding
in the clockwise circuit. It is the "way" of one shaman to
hold up both child and cradle if the ceremony is for a boy but to
gesture with the cradle only if the infant is a girl. Finally, the
[574] cradle is faced to the east, and, after three ritual feints, the child
[601] is placed inside. A feast and social occasion follow. According to
one informant, a child may later address a parental or grand-
parental term to the person who lifted him into the cradle, even
though no actual relationship exists.

- 854 This rite is essentially a prayer that the child be spared to
occupy the cradle in the future, for it is not until a month or more
[852] has elapsed and "the neck is strong enough so that the head does
[856] not hang limply" that the child is kept continuously in the cra-
dle. After that, the mother carries the cradle by a tumpline pass-
[482] ing across her chest or, more infrequently, over her forehead.
[492] Even when she travels on horseback, she often carries the cradle
strung across her hip by the carrying strap and suspended over
the side of the horse.

854 To the amulets and pendants supplied by the shaman the
789 mother generally adds some of her own. The right paw of the
badger, with grass substituted for the bone, is hung on the cradle
751 to guard the child from fright. Such protection is important, for
[825] fright lies at the root of a number of serious illnesses. Humming-
bird claws and pieces of wildcat skin also act as cradle charms.
[753] To ward off colds and other sickness, a length of cholla wood is
[824] often tied on the cradle. When anything is wrong with the child,
a growth found on the creosote bush is suspended from the
[755] canopy. It is a general rule that no one may step over a child or a
[784] cradle.

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[facing p. 12]

PLATE II



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United States National Museum

CARRYING THE CRADLE

AN APACHE LIFE-WAY

- 854 Once the child is old enough for the cradleboard, it becomes his almost permanent home for a number of months. This continuous stay in the cradle causes a slight occipital flattening of the head. The baby is laced in tightly and is removed only occasionally. He may even be left in the cradle while he is nursed. He does have to be taken out when the soft grass, moss, or pulverized wild-rose bark, used as padding and as absorbent material for the discharges, needs renewing. To prevent chafing, the child is dusted with powder scraped from the bark of the heart-leaved willow. A very young child is bathed in a decoction obtained by boiling the plant *Drymaria fendleri* "to make the skin strong."

854 As the child becomes more active and restless, beads and jingles of various kinds are strung from the canopy to engage his attention. After he is six or seven months old he is allowed more time outside the cradle and crawls vigorously around the camp.

854 During this crawling stage the child must be carefully watched, lest he come in contact with baneful substances which can cause sickness—worms, certain insects, and feathers from evil birds such as the owl or the crow. Dogs are considered particularly inappropriate in a camp where there is a small child.

If you have a little child crawling around and suddenly a dog barks at it and scares it, they say that the fright will go inside that child and make its heart sick. So they don't like dogs around much. If you have one, some man might come along and say, "Why do you have that dog around? Don't you know it is no good? It might scare your children and make them sick."

766 When a child is stillborn or dies while it is being carried in the cradle, its body is hastily buried in a talus slope and is covered by rocks, branches, and earth. The cradle, if it has already been made, has a different destination:

845 They take the cradle and cut it so it will be recognized; cut slits in the buckskin, for instance. They hang it up in a tree which stands to the east of the encampment where the death took place. No one will dare to touch it. It is forbidden to touch it. If the cradle is still around the camp, it is hung out at the child's death even though the child is already walking when he dies. Sometimes the cradle is put in a place in a bluff.

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Occasionally, a cradle is burned at the death of the child. This alternative usage conforms to the customary death practices for all of an adult's combustible possessions are ordinarily destroyed by fire at his demise. 766
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A still serviceable cradle, if the child for whom it was made is alive and healthy, may be used for a newborn sibling of the same sex. Nevertheless, a cradle ceremony is held for the new baby. The more usual practice is to fashion a separate cradle for each child. 854 •
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There are no conventionalized cradlesongs, but the mother often croons some such improvised lullaby as, "Little baby, go to sleep again." "Sometimes it goes way up and makes you feel sorry for the baby. It almost makes you want to cry." To quiet a fretful child, a man or a woman swings the cradle and sings a vigorous tune accompanied by such words as: 854
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This, my little baby!
This, my little baby!

FIRST STEPS

Life is conceived as a path along which individuals must constantly be helped by ritual devices. This trail must be followed exactly as the heroes of mythical times are said to have journeyed along it. It is appropriate, therefore, that the baby's first steps should be ceremonially celebrated. 852
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Since this rite is purely symbolic in nature, it may occur before the child actually begins to walk or some time afterward. It will not take place until the child is at least seven months old, and it has ordinarily been held before he is two years of age. On this occasion the infant dons his first moccasins, an aspect of the rite which gives it its name, "Putting on Moccasins." As in the other rites, practitioners who "know" this particular ceremony must be hired. Depending on their "way" and the wealth and importance of the family sponsoring the occasion, the ceremony will vary in detail. The account that follows summarizes the basic pattern. [756]
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MATURATION

During these events, women of the adolescent girl's family⁹⁹ have brought baskets of fruit and nuts to the rear of the hide⁸⁸¹ upon which she has stood. They throw these presents upon the^[431] hide, and a scramble ensues. Thus the cycle which began when the pollen footprints were drawn has been completed symbolically; the fruits have followed the pollen and the season of growth. In the good-natured din and confusion the girl and her attendant retire. The girl has custody of the singer's rattle until evening. It is noon before this opening ritual is concluded, and more food is now distributed.

The afternoon is devoted to social activities—dancing in the open space to the east of the ceremonial structure, singing, racing, and visiting. Men gather at the hoop-and-pole ground, while the women play the stave game. The girl's parents move about among their guests, and grateful visitors seek them out to comment upon their hospitality and "to say they are thankful that this daughter has grown up to have the ceremony." "The feasters are shown respect, and all obey them. Nobody ever breaks this rule."

Ordinarily, the girl's ritual obligations are over until evening, but she may be requested to treat the very young during the day:

The Chiricahua believe that it is good luck for a child or a baby if a girl who is White Painted Woman lifts it up. At any time during the ceremony the girl can take a very young child, pick it up under the arms, and hold it to the directions. This is done to give the child long life and good luck.

She also helps the infirm:

If your arm is crooked, go to the girl at the time of the ceremony. She can work it and make it straight. She picks up children by the neck too. It is good for them. They tell me to let one of the girls work on me. [This man has a crippled arm.] I go there, but there are lots of people in there, and I back out every time.

In the late afternoon of the first day the adolescent girl or the singer, using a fire drill, lights a fire in the ceremonial structure. This fire is to be kept alive during the course of the ritual or, at least, during the nights. Sometime in the afternoon a great pile of firewood is stacked to the north side of the ceremonial structure. This will be used for the fire around which the masked dancers will perform.